

The Mind's Eye

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Nuclear Arms: Freeze or . . . What?

THE FEAR HAS BEEN IN US SINCE HIROSHIMA. It has mounted and receded by turns over the years. We have always known there would be "no place to hide." But we comforted ourselves. We trusted that the world is run by reasonable men who would not risk atomic warfare. For it would almost certainly result in their own deaths as well as ours. But something has changed. The fear is back. Our trust is gone. We are hearing things that do not make sense.

Officials in our government assert that nuclear war can be "limited" and that it is winnable. They say it can be "protracted" and that it is survivable. There is such a thing, we are told, as "nuclear warfighting" in which we can prevail. For more than thirty years we have believed that nuclear arms are political weapons, not military. Their sole value was thought to lie in the fact that they could never be used. This was the doctrine of deterrence based on mutually assured destruction. Now we hear something quite different. But we cannot listen. For we are not persuaded that there is an escape from total disaster if a nuclear exchange is allowed to happen. The euphemism "exchange" is by itself profoundly disquieting. It reveals a government thinking the unthinkable but unable to speak the unspeakable. We prefer to trust the insight of George F. Kennan in words he spoke at Dartmouth College last November: "This entire preoccupation with nuclear war—a preoccupation which appears to hold most of our government in its grip—is a form of illness. It is morbid in the extreme. There is no hope in it—only horror."

KENNAN declared his belief that the majority of us do not share the government's view, that we are not preoccupied with how to fight a nuclear war. And it appears he is right. Facts have emerged to show that we are preoccupied with a quite separate matter, namely, how to avoid nuclear war—and even further, how to put a final end to its threat. Early this year the Louis Harris organization conducted a poll (reported in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, August/September 1982, and elsewhere) whose findings portray a people in broad disagreement with its government. Eighty-six percent of Americans want the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate nuclear arms reduction. Eighty-one percent want the United States and the Soviet Union to agree to produce no new nuclear weapons, provided there is a rough equivalence of such weapons today. By 59 to

38 percent they believe that equivalence does in fact obtain. This is a near-exact reversal of 1980 opinion, when by 57 to 37 percent the Soviet Union was perceived as being stronger than the United States—a remarkable turnabout in the face of the Reagan administration's persistent drumbeating of American inferiority. Finally, and perhaps most striking, 74 percent of Americans want all countries that have nuclear weapons to destroy them.

Harris, who has been taking polls for thirty years, regards these public attitudes as an "incredible phenomenon" because they are so overwhelmingly opposed to official policy and are shared by people who tend to disagree with each other on almost everything else. The nuclear war issue, he said, "cuts right across the spectrum of social and political divisions in this country. It's an idea that will not go away. It's going to be with us until the final weapons are obliterated."

AND SO this subject—the idea of our own extinction as a species, which Jonathan Schell in his *Fate of the Earth* has shown to be so exquisitely hard to think about and talk about—is being faced up to by many, many people and addressed as a problem that *must* be solved. Consider the alternative. Between them the United States and the Soviet Union have 40,000 to 50,000 nuclear warheads, strategic and tactical, targeted on each other (and on Europe and China) in approximately equal numbers. We can destroy every major Russian city 35 times. The Russians can destroy every major American city 28 times. The U.S. National Security Council has estimated that in a single general attack and counterattack the number of dead in the United States would be 140,000,000 and in the Soviet Union, 113,000,000. Transportation systems, food systems, communication systems, health care systems would be wiped out. No trucks or trains would move, no planes would fly. No food would come except from the tainted crops in home gardens. Radio would give no sound, television no picture. Radioactive fallout would rain on the globe, poisoning the earth. As much as 70 percent of the ozone layer would be depleted, allowing the entrance of lethal ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The few hospitals and clinics and doctors' offices still standing could do little for the survivors, who, as someone has said, would "envy the dead." No one can say for sure that the human race would survive this chaos. Civilization—society—would not.

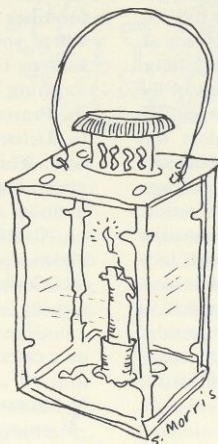
IT IS TO THE CREDIT of the people that they have brought themselves to gaze on this dread prospect and found the wit to deal with it with practical measures. The first step is to persuade both sides to stop where they are in the development of nuclear arms. The instrument used to bring this about is the Nuclear Weapons Freeze resolution. The Freeze movement grew out of the widespread conviction that current national policy is irrational and that it runs the gravest risk of bringing on the inferno. It had its formal beginning at a conference of thirty peace groups in January 1980 which endorsed a Freeze proposal drafted by Randall Forsberg, director of the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, a four-page document entitled "Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race." In this was contained the original Freeze resolution which, with variations, has appeared in town meeting warnings, state referendums, and legislative resolutions:

To improve national and international security, the United States and the Soviet Union should stop the nuclear arms race. Specifically, they should adopt a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and of missiles and new aircraft designed primarily to deliver nuclear weapons. This is an essential, verifiable *first step* toward lessening the risk of nuclear war and reducing nuclear arsenals. (Italics added.)

The movement, first seen as a long-range educational effort, virtually exploded in the late winter and spring of 1982. By midsummer the Freeze resolution had been passed in 693 town meetings, city and county councils, and state legislatures. On August 5 it was turned back in the House of Representatives by a vote of 204 to 202—a narrow decision influenced by hard administration lobbying. In September Wisconsin's statewide referendum approved it, three to one. Eight more states will vote on it in November. Meanwhile, on June 12 the Freeze drew 700,000 people to a march and rally in New York City; it was the largest political demonstration in the history of the United States.

HOW MAY WE account for the Freeze movement? In simplest terms, what has happened is that our overriding fear has made us transfer our trust to ourselves, the people, with a force and urgency so massive and unprecedented that the government will not be able to ignore it. Using the ballot, the movement respectfully commands the government's attention. The president's unfortunate remarks of a few days ago, to the effect that Freeze proponents, though sincere, are being exploited by unnamed (presumably

communist) parties, are not likely to be repeated. The Freeze is not a short-term political game; it is for keeps. It is, nevertheless, politics in the purest and most serious vein because it concerns the conduct of the nation in the most momentous matter ever to confront the human race. For this reason Common Cause, with its 250,000 members and its powerful lobby, has joined the battle and committed its expertise to coordinate the drive for a nuclear STOP. It is conducting weekly meetings with the peace groups based in Washington and has set up citizen networks in all fifty states to bring Freeze-pressure on senators and congressmen. Common Cause is in it for the long term, and so are we all. The list of peace groups throughout the country is endless.



Weighty objections and subtle distinctions will come from experts on all sides. The "iron triangle" of the executive, the military, and the defense industries will resist. The segment of the scientific community which researches nuclear war will continue its disinterested journey of discovery, contributing to the "technology creep" which increases the danger day by day. Thoughtful criticism is exemplified in a long article by the foreign relations scholar Theodore Draper, published in the *New York Review of Books* for July 15, 1982. After dismissing the agony of Jonathan Schell, the pretensions of the nuclear freeze, the fecklessness of arms control talks, and the semantics of Bundy & Co.'s no-first-use proposal (no first use, says Draper, means no use at all, which lays us open to attack), he comes down

in favor of a self-imposed, minimal level of mutual deterrence which could lead to a comprehensive test ban treaty. Draper, it should be noted, is just as afraid of where current policy is leading us as anyone else.

THE QUESTION is of supreme importance. It sweeps aside all other questions. We search for an answer. There is a saying, variously attributed, "And this, too, shall pass away," which has always calmed the human spirit. The saying can no longer be said. The ground of human interaction has shifted. The atom split has changed our thinking, not so much because the atom was split—releasing on this cool planet the fire of the stars—but because we who know not how to guide the stars did the splitting. What are we now to do, holding this blinding light in our hands?

—Charles McIsaac

The Mind's Eye invites readers' responses to the views expressed in this editorial.

The Videvangelists

by Harris Elder

ONE OF THE FEW pleasant experiences I had as a GI came accidentally, from an unexpected source. I was assigned to the funeral detail, which provided military honors for any soldier whose family requested them. In Sherman, Texas, the deceased were often black veterans with survivors who couldn't afford to honor their dead with elaborate burial ceremonies. Our spit-and-polish demeanor as we executed pallbearer duties and rifle salutes should have spruced up the physical environment. It did not. Even though Sherman's all-black churches were always crumbling buildings in deteriorating neighborhoods, with furnishings as simple as the dress of the congregation, it was precisely that atmosphere which ennobled us. Somehow all our military gloss was dimmed by the genuineness of the songs, spontaneous yet performed as if painstakingly rehearsed, expressions of grief carried out with imperfect perfection. The melding of celebration and mourning peculiar to black obsequies made twenty white guys look rather shabby (in spite of our having passed inspection), for we were in the presence of a real world of patient suffering, hope, and love which transcended the humble surroundings—and was light years away from a “religious” phenomenon which exploits the spiritual needs of many.

IT IS SUNDAY MORNING. The studio lights brighten over a sparkling set. An impeccably dressed man pirouettes out from behind Georgian columns and sings into a prop microphone. Six Busby Berkeley princesses dance around the cheerleading man while the television picture alternates between him and each of these good-looking, well-scrubbed girls. The camera moves like an eighth performer. There's great fun in this glossy production. Is it a new Dr. Pepper commercial? Another TV ad for an exciting Broadway hit? Donny and Marie Osmond selling Hawaiian Punch? No, it's Richard Roberts, son of Oral, salesman of happiness, prayer rugs, and anointing oil.

The Oral Roberts show taps the best persuasive strategies found in other television advertising. Later in the program, we are treated to shots of the Prayer Tower at Oral Roberts University while we hear Richard's voice-over interviews with grateful consumers of Oral's TV ministry and readers of his latest book, *Miracles of Seed-Faith*. Crisp transitional music introduces a hand puppet who has learned that if he reads God's news (included in the book), he'll understand his place in the Big Plan. The entertainment

returns when the disco-tripping Richard lip-synchs another secularly styled religious song. This prepares us for an unrelenting parade of seductive commercials for Oral Roberts University. Slender students (the overweight must not approach Oral's altar) have assembled with pie-faced smiles in front of the Prayer Tower; these shots are intercut with more campus scenes, including television-assisted learning consoles and reaction shots of clean-cut students. Richard promises that “God has a way for you to get from where you are to where you want to be” at Oral Roberts University. Tranquil background music and soothing lyrics along with more shots of ORU and the Prayer Tower set the stage for another voice-over by Richard, extolling the virtues of the Roberts ministry. This opening segment, designed to pitch the upcoming program to troubled people, culminates with “. . . and now, author, educator, and evangelist . . . Oral Roberts!” Oral's timing is perfect when he makes his entrance to taped applause, adulation, and the closing lyrics of a song: “Jesus of Nazareth is passing. . . passing your way!” Clearly, this man has a hotline to heaven. The Father, Son, and holy Oral on a cathode-ray tube.

VOLUME MINISTRIES carried over electronic media enjoy huge budgets and opulent physical facilities, swollen descendants of the humble revival tent where Oral got the inspiration for *Miracles of Seed-Faith*. What became of the old-time canvas tent, where the saved and the to-be-saved could escape the damp heat of a summer evening? According to Oral Roberts, “air conditioning” is what happened. Technology brings the comforts which God has provided, including the marvels of video, and the volume evangelists contribute brainpower to make it all pay off. The total capital investment for such religious institutions as ORU, Rex Humbard's Cathedral of Tomorrow, Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral, Herbert W. Armstrong's Ambassador College, and Jerry Falwell's Liberty Baptist College tips the multi-million dollar scale. It also provides a forum where these TV ministers can flex their egos, which are as large as their new tents.

“Oral, be different from other men. Be like Jesus,” his mother advised the youthful Roberts. When asked how much Oral knew about psychology, one of his close associates replied, “Everything but what's in the books. He has an innate, uncanny ability to motivate people. It doesn't matter whether he's read about the

psychological basis for motivation or not. He already knows it." And so on his show Oral promises that "something *good* is going to happen to you." Usually, a statement precedes this which links Oral to that good: "Because I know that through *Seed-Faith* you can rise above your problems, something *good* is going to happen to you." He looks directly at the camera and points right at the viewer, emphasizing the word *good*. You can plant a seed for only \$5, but credit cards are not accepted.

What does it cost to be "like Jesus"? And what's the return? Roberts spends about \$8 million a year just to buy television time. But with a mail room handling 20,000 letters per day, 90% of which include an average gift of \$5, the expected daily return totals about \$90,000. That's \$450,000 each week, \$23,400,000 a year. The additional money he receives from seminars and other television-promoted activities brings his gross to nearly \$60 million. Other electronic religious "leaders" can expect similar returns on investment. The Old Time Gospel Hour with Jerry Falwell spends a reported \$14 million per year on radio and TV; the Christian Broadcasting Network spends \$7 million; the Praise the Lord Network and Rex Humbard each spend \$8 million; Billy Graham spends \$10 million. For this outlay, the electronic churches bring in over \$194 million per year in donations. Such a torrent of dollars argues that it pays to advertise.



WHO FINANCES these videovangelists? If a TV ministry falls under the Federal Communications Commission category of public affairs programming, it must be given free air time. There are plenty of local religious programs on the air each Sunday; they're easily identified by the absence of artificiality—elaborate sets, deft editing, and, of course, appeals for money—characteristic of their income-generating cousins. Yet the vast majority of the regional and national audience sees "paid religion," televised mass ministries which exist without outside sponsors. Since they sponsor themselves, it's no surprise that they're packed with self-advertisement. Ambitious video ministers have removed a financial obstacle faced by local religious institutions whose congregations are limited by the size of the community they serve. For nationally televised religion can extend its message into homes everywhere on Sunday morning. And that expanded community is the problem: these TV ministers can't really help anyone on a personal basis, so they end up providing little more than a spiritual narcotic, a temporary substitute which avoids the crux of their viewers' needs.

If these shows don't reach people in a traditional sense, what's their appeal? Most of them shy away from hellfire and damnation. Just give God your best and

expect His best in return. Your "best" means giving money that will increase your chances of winning God's support, like putting more dollars into lottery tickets. A combination of lively style and digestible substance, calculated not to upset the viewers too much, capitalizes on that tantalizing and enduring attraction of movies and television, instant gratification. Push a button, and into your living room flows an array of varnished unrealities. And as viewers watch more, they want more, becoming willing victims of their own leisure. The contribution doesn't have to be a big one—just enough so you'll "join up"; once your dollars start rolling in, you'll be more inclined to keep up the giving, to live up to the compact after you've made that initial commitment. In fact, lots of "offers" on TV religious programming are sent free to get the ball rolling, so you'll stake that claim in your worldly and heavenly future. Your name also gets on the computerized mailing list.

Oral Roberts epitomizes the approach. He exploits our hunger for satisfaction-on-demand by spewing out generalized advice in word-processed letters, as if God's mysterious ways work like a fast-food business. God is always available to meet your needs if you'll show faith by giving to Oral. Why wait to reap your rewards in the hereafter if they'll slide down a stainless steel chute like a Big Mac? You won't be quickly satisfied in the church down the street, but immediate results will come from money mailed to Tulsa. Need categories for which "individual" letters have been prepared are entered into a computer memory containing names and addresses of those who have responded to past appeals; eventually the right letter will reach enough of this "congregation" to turn a profit.

Oral's closing message promises that he will "pray that as I stretch forth these hands which I've given to God, that a miracle in your finances, in your health, in your marriage, and in your relationships with people will begin to happen now, this very day, at this very moment. Amen and amen." Then it's time to change the mood and close the deal: "When you write," Oral coos, "tell me about your problems. I *love* to hear from you. Your letters mean *so much* to me and Evelyn. And I'll answer your letter. I answer all my mail and I pray over all your letters. And *now*, as you go through the remainder of this week, remember these words: 'Greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world!'" As this "prayer" ends, background music swells up, followed by a catchy tune which concludes the show. Then it's time to write to Oral Roberts for his latest book, and to include a check. Do it *now*!

Compared to Oral Roberts University and its Prayer Tower, Rex Humbard's Cathedral of Tomorrow re-

sembles a tract house, but this good ol' boy, he's no quitter. Rex needs more money to invest in Ohio girdle manufacturing, so he decided to start him a TV church. After an opening montage of Cathedral of Tomorrow scenes, out comes a buxom singer wearing a ruffled pink and blue dress and diamonds, loser of the Dolly Parton Look-Alike Contest. Then Rex's voice echoes in the Cathedral (or is it on the audio mixer?) to prime us for the latest hybrid of the old-fashioned prayer-rug pitch, "snapshots" of his daughter's wedding—on the show, of course—to Dan Darling. Family ties are "God's number-one institution," Rex tells us, and along with those pictures of Dan and Liz he'll send a copy of his recent book *How to Have a Happy Home*. Last week's broadcast featured the wedding itself, with Maude Amy Humbard's pious tears and plastic hairdo. She'd brought along sample vials of anointing oil for our inspection. Rex himself was all gussied up in a black tuxedo. He's still wearing it this week, but the wrinkles have been pressed out. (Or are his shows for the month all taped in a day?) There's something off-key about Rex in his black tux, asking in his quaky voice, "Are you sure you're going to meet God? Let me tell you now, buddy boy, you better prepare!" But it's easy to get admitted to the Kingdom: for a ten-dollar contribution you "are loved."

HUMBARD's occasional warnings of fire and brimstone (don't worry, they've cooled down) appear nowhere on the *Hour of Power*. The Reverend Robert Schuller uses Possibility Thinking, a variation of Seed-Faith, to promise results in the here and now. With Possibility Thinking you can do anything you want to do, maybe even drive a Mercedes 450 SL. All that's required is to listen to Schuller, send for his books, and enclose money. Far from a hip-pocket operation, *Hour of Power* is a slick production which makes for comfortable viewing. And you won't be bothered with burning-in-hell prospects on this country-club extravaganza of affluent Californians sporting new clothes and elegant coiffures. Schuller's "tent," called the Crystal Cathedral, looks more like a mammoth Waterford decanter than a place where humble worshippers offer religious supplications. *Hour of Power* uses multiple cameras, live and taped insert shots, complicated editing, grandiose music which swells the heart and thins the wallet, tugs at those emotions. In the opening sequence of each show, exterior shots of the Crystal Cathedral and grounds are edited into all the Lord-praising

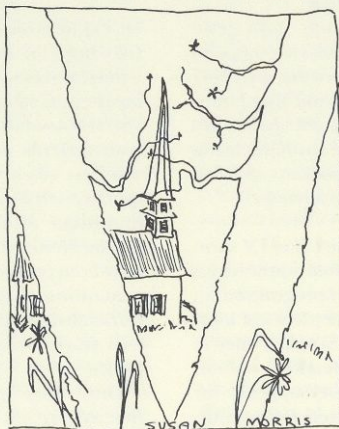
inside. Schuller wears a robe and hood more like those of an academic than a clergyman. His unctuous voice is perfect, so much so that when he first appears on the balcony overlooking the congregation, he sounds almost like a self-parody. Later, on the main stage, he asks his audience to "turn around, shake hands. God loves you and so do I." Those Californians love this relaxed socializing, at least the ones *Hour of Power's* video editor lets us see. Out West, it's an "experience."

The West Point choir has brought its trumpet section; shots of singing cadets are spliced into the fanfare using equipment which would rival the video mixer seen at the beginning of Johnny Carson's show. As a testimony to the power of Possibility Thinking, one cadet whose parachute had failed to open tells his story of prayer and promise if he were spared. Possibility Thinking made the upwinds favorable and placed cushioning tree branches between the cadet and the unforgiving ground. Next comes the morning offering. An off-camera announcer ca-

joles the congregation on to more giving while skillfully orchestrated music inspires folks even further and muffles annoying coughs and movement. The *Hour of Power* technicians milk the offering for all it's worth, alternating long, medium, and close-up shots of the most generous members of the congregation, expanding those present into an even larger crowd of eager contributors. An inexorable spirit of giving is sweeping the Crystal Cathedral. "I'm going to feel good today," exhales Schuller, who's just seen the tithing on a television monitor. With a toothy smile, he offers us a free coffee mug printed with his feel-good motto. A brief

musical interlude by Toby and Barb Waldowski helps us to "enjoy life to its fullest." Nearly everything about *Hour of Power* is aimed at enjoyment, with lots of emphasis on the positive, a video update of Norman Vincent Peale. The Waldowskis may be unfamiliar, but Schuller has a bag of names ready to drop: he knows Doris Day personally, and tells a cozy anecdote about her husband's success using Possibility Thinking. The closing "Amen" enjoys more high quality production values. *Hour of Power* represents the ultimate in religious pop-aesthetics.

AS ENTERTAINMENT, these elaborate television productions make old-time religion look rather pallid at first glance. And who wants to bother with getting dressed and going to church to be saved when it's easier to flick a switch in living-room comfort?



But there's a refreshing lack of polish in the texture of real-life evangelism that gets lost in the slick Sunday-morning programming. Without the latest in audio and video editing, props, and canned content, religion for sale would practically disappear. It *needs* elaborate production to hide its spiritual poverty, to fill the evangelical void created by self-advertisement. The desperate folks who watch for solutions to alcoholism, loneliness, divorce, poverty, and terminal illness have been lulled into equating camera work with God's work and voice-overs with the voice of God. Being fooled into believing that the evangelist on the tube is solving their problems only compounds their desperation. The more they tune in, the more they are not helped; the more desperate they become, the more they tune in. TV evangelism is self-propagating propaganda which convinces a vulnerable audience that its real needs are being met even though these shows do little more than tease viewers into prying open their pocketbooks.

Some preachers, like Jimmy Swaggart, refer to their TV work as "world-wide ministries." That may be one of the most accurate statements made on these shows. With the expansion of cable and satellite TV, the world may be the only limit as the "message" gets translated into several languages. But on the national and international scale, it's hardly the individual who counts, except for his \$5 contribution. In Sherman, Texas, the coffin remained open throughout the service while a beat-up and out-of-tune piano led the singing. How would those shots look edited into Crystal Cathedral splendor? The rank exploitation of believers on Sunday morning, executed with a cunning so disingenuous it smacks of mockery, should give the observer of televised counterfeit religion plenty of fuel for indignation.

Harris Elder, assistant professor of English at North Adams State College, grew up in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, fifty miles north of Oral Roberts's Prayer Tower.

Art and Nature Revisited

The Lightning Field and the Jar

by Lea Newman

WHEN MY DAUGHTER promised me an unusual art experience during my visit with her in New Mexico, I was not prepared for possible encounters with rattlesnakes or for a mandatory twenty-four hour stay in an isolated log cabin—or for any of the other happenings that are part of viewing an art object called *The Lightning Field*. Linda's letter referred in very general terms to a piece of land sculpture located a few hours from Albuquerque. She well knew that her sketchiness would arouse my perverse taste for adventure (I am a pushover for mysterious unknowns). I accepted her invitation by return mail, thereby consenting to a journey toward a wholly unexpected epiphany. The weekend I was to spend on a remote, semiarid tract of ranch land in west-central New Mexico would become the most perplexing and disturbing, yet the most strangely satisfying, aesthetic encounter of my life.

Previewing information about *The Lightning Field* came from the Dia Art Foundation in New York, the organization that commissioned and maintains the work. Although the memorandum concerned itself primarily with the practicalities of confirming reservations and of finding the foundation office in Quemado, it included some stipulations that immediately suggested this was not going to be a conventional tour of an art gallery. The *Field* had to be visited over

at least a twenty-four hour period, and visitors—who were to number no more than three at once—were to spend one or two nights at a former homestead adjacent to the *Field* where food and lodging would be provided. (Our guide informed us later that many visitors came alone.) A foundation vehicle would provide transportation from the Quemado office to the site of the *Field*, an hour's ride away; we were to arrive in Quemado at 1:00 P.M. and to plan to leave the *Field* at noon on the day of departure.

IT WAS NOT until I was seated in the back seat of Linda's ancient Volkswagen bug on a three-and-a-half hour ride out of Albuquerque that I again realized that I did not know what we were going to see. But my questions about *The Lightning Field* fell on deaf ears. Both Linda and her friend Roger Sweet, the conceptual artist and teacher who had generously shared his invitation with us, refused to offer any details.

My own work in literary criticism had led me into the often obscure realms of aesthetic theory. I had a general notion of what experiential and conceptual art involved. Apparently, *The Lightning Field* was going to combine both of these nontraditional approaches to art. Roger, who knew more than he was telling, and Linda, who always enjoyed surprising

me, diverted my attention to the breathtaking scenes that surrounded us. The grandeur of the mountain ranges and the vastness of the sky above them pre-empted my discussion of artistic theory. I silently remembered Emerson's reference to the Andes as "temples" (in his poem "The Problem") and I understood more completely than ever before why he concluded that "Art might obey, but not surpass" the beauty of nature. I did not know then that *The Lightning Field* would make the distinction irrelevant.

Abruptly, we were in Quemado, a half-hour ahead of schedule. The almost deserted town (population, 250) had one open cafe where the Dia Foundation guide spotted us almost immediately. We were soon on the last leg of our journey, and it did not take long to realize why the foundation provided its own four-wheel drive transportation: the VW would have foundered on the ruts and patches of red mud that we negotiated.

"Must have rained last night," was our guide's unconcerned comment as we swayed and bounced in unison, four abreast on the seat of the pickup truck. She had been driving in this country all her life, she told us; all of eighteen, and entering Brigham Young University in a few weeks, she was as matter-of-fact about the terrain as about the red ants and rattlesnakes she nonchalantly warned us to avoid. I was beginning to sense the full implications of experiencing an "isolated work of land art."

WE CAME to a log cabin and assorted outbuildings. Behind them I beheld a wide expanse of clouds and sky over an empty landscape. Only later did I realize that I had been looking directly at *The Lightning Field* but literally did not see it. The explanation of this paradox is simple enough: in the artist's description of the work (*Artforum*, April 1980, pp. 52-59) he writes that "during the mid-portion of the day 70 to 90 percent of the poles become virtually invisible due to the high angle of the sun." A subsequent statement in De Maria's text is more enigmatic: "The invisible is real."

Even as I stood there, the light shifted, the glare lessened—and the real became visible. Before me lay a grid of shiny poles in perpendicular rows. This sometimes invisible work of art turned out to be 400 highly polished stainless steel poles arranged in parallel rows to form a rectangle one kilometer wide and one mile long, with sixteen poles in each kilometer-wide row and twenty-five poles in each mile-long row. The guide

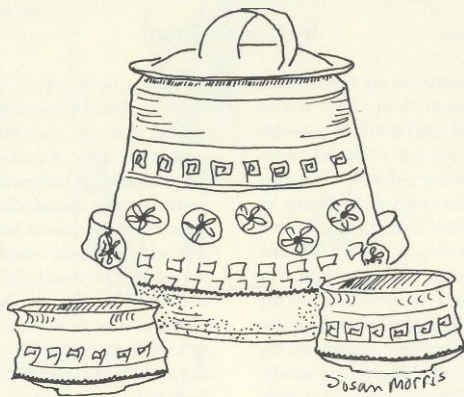
provided some of the specifics; the *Artforum* feature, others. Both sources confirmed my growing conviction that the invisible/real paradox was only the first of several coexisting contrarities.

ITS GENESIS revealed another set of contradictions. It is one man's conception, but it is the creation of many men other than the artist. *The Lightning Field* originated in a note by Walter De Maria in 1969. Its physical form was completed on November 1, 1977, and involved the work of surveyors, engineers, technicians, and construction teams. I remembered that in the tradition of the conceptual art movement the idea or concept of a work is its prime aspect; the execution becomes a mechanical task not dependent on the artist's craft or skill. In the case of *The Lightning Field* the positioning of the rectangular grid, the elevation of the terrain, and the placement and height of each pole were determined by an aerial survey, a computer analysis, and a land survey. Each pole was cut to its own individual length within a tolerance of 1/100 of an inch, so that the plane of the tips would evenly support an imaginary sheet of glass. The poles range in height from 15 feet to 26 feet 9 inches, with the average pole height at 20 feet 7 1/2 inches. The spaces between the poles are accurate to within 1/25 of an inch. The poles

are set in concrete foundations and have heavy carbon steel pipes as a core. In the most memorable of the construction photographs that our guide showed us the installation crew, in dirt-covered blue jeans and mud-encrusted boots, gingerly handled the stainless steel casings wearing spanking white gloves.

Another of the paradoxes is the fact that *The Lightning Field* is also nature's creation. In De Maria's words, "The land is not the setting for the work but a part of the work." Much

time and effort were expended in finding the right kind of natural elements. The states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and Texas were searched by truck over a five-year period before the location in New Mexico was selected. The terrain has not been altered to accommodate the sculpture. The plant and animal life that the habitat naturally sustains remains unchanged—including, our guide reminded us, its rattlesnake population. (Fortunately, I cannot vouch for the rattlesnakes personally. I was sufficiently appalled when I saw the emergency kit for rattlesnake bites among the first-aid supplies in the cabin.)



THE SUNSET that evening confirmed nature's hand in the rendering of *The Lightning Field* experience. In truth, it would have been an awesomely beautiful sight with or without the 400 poles it transformed into sheaths of gleaming copper. The mountains in the distance, the clouds overhead, the entire terrain as far as one could see turned brilliant shades of orange and red and yellow. But *The Lightning Field* somehow appropriated the sunset and turned the most natural of phenomena into an integral part of itself. The syzygetic effect was total. Again in Emerson's words, but in a different context from his, "I yielded myself to the perfect whole."

The full impact of the contradictions involved did not strike me until the next morning. My heightened response in the morning hours bore out Thoreau's maxim that "all memorable events . . . transpire in morning time." De Maria may have been guaranteeing a morning experience for every viewer when he made a twenty-four hour stay one of the conditions for a visit. Whether he was intentionally heeding Thoreau's injunction or not, he echoes another of Thoreau's favorite themes—the need to totally immerse oneself in an environment in order to fully experience it—when he points out that "the primary experience takes place within the *Lightning Field*." It did for me early that morning.

As I walked among the polished posts, gazing down the mathematically precise rows on all sides of me, I had to stop occasionally to choose my footing on the uneven ground and to cast a wary eye out for rattlers. Patches of scrub grass dotted what would ordinarily have been grazing land, tufts of wildflowers bloomed haphazardly among the sparse vegetation, insects buzzed by, and tiny birds flitted about, every so often lighting on the tops of the stainless steel poles. The contradictions once again merged into a unified whole as they had done at sunset the day before, but this time the immensity of the juxtaposition hit home. The sculpture that surrounded me was a piece of art, by definition a man-created object, and of a different order of things from the natural phenomena in which it was set. The coterminousness of this man-conceived, technologically created thing with the spontaneously generated scrub grass, wildflowers, birds, and insects jarred my sensibilities: the fertility, mutability, and chaotic randomness of nature somehow became part of the imposed order, infecundity, and fixed purposiveness of art. The poles would not multiply as the living things would, but neither would the poles die. In De Maria's *Lightning Field* both orders of things had achieved the kind of immortality we attribute to art.

A SENSE OF DEJA VU nagged at me. Yet I knew I had never seen anything remotely like these parallel rows of shiny poles stretching out amidst the flora and fauna of the high ranch country of New Mexico.



The strange novelty of the experience stirred a memory of a perception previously acknowledged in another place and another time. In a flash the words came to me, "It took dominion everywhere. . . . It did not give of bird or bush"—fragments of a poem about a jar atop a hill in Tennessee. Wallace Stevens's "Anecdote of the Jar" was the connection, and the relevancy was clear. Like Stevens's jar, the poles "took dominion everywhere" and "made the slovenly wilderness/Surround" them. In the same way, "The wilderness rose up to" the poles, "And sprawled around, no longer wild." The jar, wrote Stevens, was "gray and bare" and "did not give of bird or bush,/ Like nothing else in Tennessee." So it was with the poles of New Mexico: they did not bear life, but they somehow absorbed and dominated it.

Even more to the point was my ambivalence toward this isolated piece of conceptual land art. Was it, as some have concluded about Stevens's poem, a bad joke? What was I doing out in this deserted waste looking at 400 poles meticulously mounted on the range? If it were as devoid of meaning and purpose as it most certainly was of practical usefulness, why did it arouse a sense of wonder and awe in me? My last question answered my other questions because if it succeeded in being beautiful, in whatever sense, it warranted its existence. Its beauty was beyond dispute. Art needs no further justification.

WE LEFT *The Lightning Field*, on schedule, that day at noon. The poles were once again dissolving images in a shimmery haze. Euphoric, I took a final look, basking in the satisfaction that my first full-fledged conceptual art experience had been an unqualified success. I had seen *The Lightning Field*, and it was mine.

"Too bad it didn't storm again last night," our guide commented as we bounced over the cow-path road toward Quemado. "You missed the lightning by just one night." Euphoric indeed! I had seen *The Lightning Field* sans lightning—and had not noticed. Three of the five photographs in the *Artforum* feature are of the field with lightning. But the article explains, "The light is as important as the lightning." Good thing, too, since the number of lightning storms that pass over the sculpture is approximately three per thirty days during the lightning season, which lasts from May to early September. The odds are weighted heavily against seeing *The Lightning Field* with lightning. But no matter. *The Lightning Field*, with or without lightning, is an electrifying and enlightening work of art. Wallace Stevens, whose poetry reveled in the conundrum of art, might have found it a subject more evocative than a jar on a Tennessee hilltop.

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Teaching “The 1980s: Which Way for Labor?”

by Maynard Seider

ON THE THIRD DAY of class the hostelers were having a go at Roosevelt, the man and the legend. Most remembered him fondly, even though they held differing interpretations of his political motivation. Did he back the New Deal in order to avert rebellion and save capitalism, or did he push his reforms out of compassion for a needy people? Almost everyone had something to say about the thirties. One student reminded us of FDR's record as governor of New York, another could speak only of Eleanor, his wife, and a third recalled the grim determination of protesters sitting in at a New York City relief office. The discussion continued, sometimes quietly, more often not. They policed themselves, shushing one another and looking to the teacher for—if not the Word—at least a sentence or two on “The 1980s: Which Way for Labor?”

Gradually the talk subsided. I suggested we move

on to the '40s. We had miles to go before we'd reach the decade the course title promised. In the middle of the classroom a hand went up. It belonged to Hy Goldstein. Now a Floridian, Hy had been an administrator in the New York Department of Social Services and had taught English and citizenship in the schools as well. His memories of Roosevelt went back to 1931 when he stood with the rest of the student body at City College to hear the future president speak. Hy told us of a memorial poem he had written for Roosevelt. He sent it on to Eleanor Roosevelt, and the two started a correspondence. The *New York Post* published the poem, but the original rests in the library at Hyde Park. Meanwhile, the rest of us had forgotten about the '40s. We eagerly called on Hy to read his poem.

And he did, in a clear, steady voice, one that affirmed the strength of the words he had composed.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt: In Memoriam

by Hy Goldstein

Sleep, O savior, beneath the sod,
The very earth on which you trod;

In death you lie in peace, at rest,
Embraced by God, close to His breast;

Nevermore to hear the singing wren,
Nor the venomous insults of puny men;

Your hypnotic voice is forever stilled
Admirers thrilled, opponents chilled;

Never will the world forget
Your deeds so great, to you its debt;

Had God not spared you from the assassin's hand
There would be chaos throughout the land;

To a world in darkness you brought the light,
To all you proved that right is might;

May your spirit march on through eternity,
Father of the World Fraternity.

ONE IS HARD PRESSED to remember such a poignant scene in a college classroom. We clapped and congratulated Hy and felt good in his accomplishment.

Hy later told me that he had written about 150 poems in all. In his spare time he still did some teaching down in Florida—English as a second language. So he hadn't retired. As far as education was

concerned, none of the other hostellers had, either.

Our class continued the next day, moving right along, broaching new ideas, arguing and reconciling. By Friday we made it to the '80s, but not by much.

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Early Passion

The Love of the Innocents

by Herbert Moller

MARK TWAIN reports in his autobiography that he was nine years of age when he became fascinated by one Mary Miller. "I fell in love with her when she was eighteen and I was nine—but she scorned me and I recognized that this was a cold world. . . . I believe I was as miserable as even a grown person could be. But I think that this sorrow did not remain with me long."¹

There are other cases of preadolescent boys experiencing a haunting sense of enchantment by an older girl. G. Stanley Hall, the well-known American psychologist, wrote: "My first love affair had for its object a girl half a dozen years older than I who attended the academy for several terms with me. I thought her beautiful and admired all her acts and ways. . . . Once or twice I placed dainties in her desk, but I almost never dared to speak to her and she probably never dreamed of my devotion."²

JUVENILE PASSION of this type does not appear to have received any attention in the books on love and sex that have been published in great profusion since the Kinsey reports. And yet it seems that many preadolescent boys have experienced sudden, compelling, although usually fleeting, surges of love long before they were sexually mature. In historical perspective pertinent individual recollections range from those of Peter Eberhard Müllensiefen, who was raised in an eighteenth-century German Pietist environment, to those of Claude Brown, who grew up in a Harlem slum in the 1950s. Both were eleven years old at the time of the incidents, as was Wilhelm von Kügelgen, who wrote the most widely read nineteenth-century autobiography in the German language.³

In addition to autobiographical writings of the past 200 years there are the memories of living persons about such early love experiences. One of my correspondents with whom I had discussed this subject wrote: "I have an indelible recollection of a brief infatuation with an older girl. I was nine or ten years old when my piano teacher asked all her students to come together and perform in her home. The high

light of that Sunday afternoon was a trio played by one of her students and his two sisters. The older girl played the cello. I looked at her in rapt attention, and now after some forty years I can still visualize the girl, maybe nineteen years old, with serene looks, playing the cello. At night in my bed I was borne down by a sense of hopeless longing. I never even knew the name of the girl and never saw her again. I did not speak to anyone about the experience and, I think, I had no words for it."

Before the nature of these erotic attachments of children is discussed, one additional case should be mentioned. It is perhaps the most moving report among the cited autobiographical reminiscences because the sentimental involvement of the boy dragged on for many weeks while he lived through the experience more self-consciously than did the other subjects, for whom the emotional upwelling was a brief occurrence. Also, he was already twelve years and one month old, a fact he remembered exactly in his adult years. The story is found in the autobiographical novel *Niels Lyhne* (1880) by the Danish writer Jens Peter Jacobsen. The object of this boy's love was his father's younger sister, Edele, who was suffering from consumption, at that time the common name for pulmonary tuberculosis. She had moved to her brother's home in the country on the advice of her physician to obtain the reputed benefits of country air, rest, and fresh milk.

Niels became aware of his love all of a sudden when he handed Edele a bunch of cornflowers she had asked him to pick for her. From that moment on he felt painfully happy in Edele's presence. He never confessed his love to her or to anyone else, but the craving to worship her grew at times so strong that he stole into her room and pressed his lips on a garment or any other possession of hers he could

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find. Edele's health deteriorated rapidly. As the family expected her imminent death, Niels in the depth of despair knelt at the foot of his bed and with clasped hands prayed, "God, Thou must not take her from us. Oh, let her live; I will thank Thee and obey Thee; I will do everything I can to please Thee; I will be good and never offend Thee, if only Thou wilt let her live. Hear me, God!" And so his prayer went on in breathless despair. But she faded away on that same day. God had not listened.⁴

THE EROTIC feelings of children exemplified in the foregoing reports are not on the same plane as the passionate attachments of teenagers, which have been celebrated in some of the great romances of world literature. Romeo was a few years older than Juliet, who was just turning fourteen at the time of their tragic love.

Acis, the lover of Galatea, was sixteen; Daphnis was fifteen when Chloe was thirteen; Tristram was a hero nineteen years of age. In contrast to the exuberant love of these mythical teenagers and their compeers in real life, the erotic encounters of preadolescents with older love objects are remembered in later life as untimely and intrinsically hopeless and sad experiences. They are, furthermore, totally different from the sexual experimentation and playfulness in which two young children often mutually indulge. It is in fact the overtly nonsexual nature of these juvenile love attachments that makes them rather resemble the "crushes" of young people, especially adolescent girls, whose objects are usually teachers, youth leaders, actors, singers, and other public figures. In contrast to crushes, however, the experiences of preadolescents described in the autobiographic recollections are of a quiet and deeply personal nature, possessive and not shared with others. They have the seriousness of adult one-to-one relationships. Their prototype, in fact, is marriage. This was expressed, for example, by eleven-year-old Claude Brown in regard to the Viennese refugee woman he adored: "Lying in my bed thinking about it at night, I felt I had done something crazy—I had fallen in love with the nicest lady I knew, and for no reason . . . But I still wished that I had been married to her for all those years [of her past married life]."⁵

ALL THE CASES referred to in this essay are those of male children. This may be so only because of the limitations of the material under review and does not warrant any conclusion regarding gender differences. Also, there is no way of determining what percentage of boys have had such experiences. In a biological perspective all of the episodes occurred during the period of hormonal changes of the first

stage of pubescence—between the ages of 9 and 12, that is—before the appearance of secondary sex characteristics noticeable to the lay person. It is during these years that the voice of the boy becomes more sonorous, but before it changes—or breaks—at the ages between 13 and 15.

Psychologically it appears that the love objects of the preadolescent boys in this study represent images intermediate between the mother and a girl of an appropriate age. The image is projected from a boy's incipient need to detach himself from the mother as the desired object and to find another loved one. This need may well have become culturally tinged by the rise of domesticity in family relations since the eighteenth century, which involved a more caring and tender attitude of mothers to their children than had prevailed in earlier times.⁶ In a family environment of this emotional quality the affective disengagement of boys from their mothers became a task sufficiently onerous to evoke haunting and conflicted longings for a sexual partner, half mother, half girl.



NOTES

1. *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, arranged and edited by C. Neider (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 79-80.

2. G. Stanley Hall, *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist* (New York: Appleton, 1924), pp. 134-35.

3. Peter Eberhard Müllensiefen (1766-1847), *Ein deutsches Bürgerleben vor 100 Jahren: Selbstbiographie*, hrsg. F. v. Oppeln-Bronikowski (Berlin: Stilke, 1931), p. 25. Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land* (New York: New American Library, 1966). Wilhelm von Kügelgen (1802-1867), *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Mannes* (Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, n.d.), pt. III: 2. Kügelgen's love object was a girl approximately his own age, which modifies his inclusion in these case stories.

4. Jens Peter Jacobsen (1847-1885), *Niels Lyhne* (n.p., 1880), chap. 3.

5. Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, p. 92.

6. Randolph Trumbach, *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family* (New York: Academic Press, 1978). Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), chap. 6, "The Growth of Affective Individualism."

The drawings in this issue are by Susan Morris of East Dover, Vermont, and Leon Peters of North Adams State College.